



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Pennsylvania Man Who Wired Over \$8.3 Million Overseas Found Guilty of Operating Illegal Money Transmitting Business

Washington, D.C. – - A Pennsylvania man, Kesetbrhan M. Keleta, who wired over \$8.3 million to overseas customers, has been found guilty of operating an illegal money transmitting business, United States Attorney Kenneth L. Wainstein and Mark McGraw, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), announced today.

Keleta, 43, of York, Pennsylvania, was found guilty of the charges late yesterday by a federal jury in the District of Columbia. Keleta will be sentenced on October 4, 2006, before the Honorable Colleen Kollar-Kotelly. The maximum sentence Mr. Keleta faces is ten years. His likely U.S. Sentencing Guidelines range is 63 to 78 months of incarceration.

United States Attorney Wainstein stated, "The defendant operated his money transmitting business below the radar of the D.C. and federal regulators. In this post-9/11 era, it is critical that we shut down unlicensed money transmitting businesses so that they cannot be used by criminals and others who seek to harm our Nation."

Acting ICE Special Agent in Charge McGraw commented, "Money transmittal businesses that operate underground and outside the law pose significant homeland security threats. As we have seen in the past, these types of businesses can be and have been exploited by criminal organizations to move funds virtually anywhere in the world with no questions asked. Closing down this vulnerability is a priority for ICE."

The government's evidence at trial showed that, during 2001 and 2002, the defendant operated a money transmitting business at the Eritrean Cultural and Civic Center at 600 L Street, NW, Washington, D.C. Patrons of the business, known as

Himbol Financial Services, used it to send money primarily to Eritrea, but also to other destinations in East Africa and the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Kenya.

Section 1960 of Title 18 of the United States Code makes it unlawful for any person to manage, supervise, control, or direct a money transmitting business that is not licensed by a state or the District of Columbia and that has not registered with the Department of the Treasury. Himbol never had a license with the District of Columbia and never registered with the Department of the Treasury. The defendant operated the business despite knowing of these licensing requirements. During 2001 and 2002, he was responsible for wiring approximately \$8.3 million to overseas customers.

In announcing the verdict, U.S. Attorney Wainstein and Acting Special Agent in Charge McGraw praised the efforts of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agents Bryan Brunner, Katarina Gikas, and Steven Austin. They also thanked Paralegal Eugene Lee and Legal Assistants Barya Offer and Tiffany Walker for their excellent assistance in preparing the case for trial. Lastly, they commended Assistant United States Attorney Jay I. Bratt, who prosecuted the case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.